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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1088
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5546
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2739
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 0028
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2474
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0041
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0038
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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RHHMUNA/PACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCJACC/CENTCOMREAR MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L ULAANBAATAR 000275

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2017

TAGS: MARR PREL PGOV MG IZ PL

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR SAYS NEW IRAQ ROTATION REMAINS UNDECIDED

REF: A. ULAANBAATAR 220

- 1B. ULAANBAATAR 173
- 1C. ULAANBAATAR 266

Classified By: Charge Brian L. Goldbeck, for reasons 1.5(B) and (D).

¶1. (C) During a May 7 meeting on other matters, Charge asked Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Tsogtbaatar about the status of Mongolia's decision on sending an 8th rotation of troops to provide force protection for Polish troops at Camp Echo. Tsogtbaatar replied that he knew that the deadline for a decision is drawing closer, and said he would look into the issue -- but likely after he returns from a trip out of Mongolia from May 9-15. He added that after his return, he would be focusing on preparations for President Enkhbayar's May 28-30 visit to South Korea. E/P Chief noted that, after he returns June 3, the Ambassador almost certainly would request meetings with the President, Speaker and Prime Minister (the three members of Mongolia's National Security Council) to discuss his consultations in Washington and the 8th rotation. Tsogtbaatar replied that having the Ambassador raise the 8th rotation would be a welcome idea. While discussing it with the President would be "preaching to the choir," Tsogtbaatar said, it would usefully highlight for the Mongolian system that a decision needed to be made, rather than have the President need to make this point.

¶2. (C) During an April 27 meeting with A/DCM, Tsogtbaatar said he did not know when the National Security Council might discuss the 8th rotation. He commented that it really should be the Cabinet of Ministers which first makes a recommendation on a rotation, which the NSC would then endorse. However, he said, this is not how the March extension of the 7th rotation (ref b) had occurred. Instead, the Cabinet had done nothing, and military leaders had gone to President Enkhbayar noting that the March 20 departure date for the 7th rotation was fast approaching, and the troops needed to be told something. Enkhbayar had then had the NSC urge an extension of the 7th rotation until July 1, which the Cabinet had endorsed. Tsogtbaatar commented that Prime Minister Enkhbold does not want to be exposed to any political risk by being the one to initiate a decision, and thus wants the NSC to act first and share any fallout if casualties or other problems occur. However, Tsogtbaatar said, the President is sensitive to assertions by some that he is "taking up matters really within the Prime Minister's

portfolio." In approaching the decision on the 8th rotation, Tsogtbaatar said, the President would rather not give further

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ammunition for such charges.

¶3. (C) DAO is reporting separately that training of the 140 troops who would form an 8th rotation recently began at Five Hills Training Center. While the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) always train somewhat more soldiers than are later deployed, this number would allow an increase from the 100 troops in the 7th rotation, in keeping with MAF thinking after Defense Minister Sonompil's end-March visit to Iraq. The troops will finish their training in late May and, after leave, would be ready to deploy sometime in June.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: We suspect it likely that an official decision on the 8th rotation will not occur until June, since Prime Minister Enkhbold and President Enkhbayar seem determined to wait for each other to act first. The NSC usually meets to hear the results of important overseas trips, and a June NSC session to discuss the President's South Korea trip may be the time for Enkhbayar to give in and propose the rotation. Enkhbayar, who hopes to visit Washington in October (ref c), is keenly aware that having boots on the ground in Iraq will be warmly welcomed by his U.S. interlocutors. Holding the decision for the last possible moment also gives them maximum flexibility, should conditions change or significant events occur affecting their force's mission. On a related note, we understand, for example, there may be a move underway for Georgian troops to take over some or all of the Poles' mission. END COMMENT.

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